

CHAPTER V.

Before 7 o'clock that same morning | ded. Oh, she was bright as a button Captain Chester had come to the conclusion that only one course was left open for him. After the brief talk with Sloat at the office he had increased the to me and to us all than I can explain. perplexity and distress of that easily muddled soldier by requesting his company in a brief visit to the stables and corrals, A "square" and reliable old veteran was the quartermaster sergeant who had charge of those establishments. Chester had known him for years, and his fidelity and honesty were matters the officers of his former regiment could not too highly commend. When Sergeant Parks made an official statement, there was no shaking its solidity. He slept in a little box of a house close by the entrance to the main stable, in which were kept the private horses of several of the officers, and among them Mr. Jerrold's, and it was his boast that day or night no horse left that stable without his knowledge. The old man was superintending the morning labors of the stable hands and looked up in surprise at so early a visit from the of-

ficer of the day. "Were you here all last night, sergeant?" was Chester's abrupt question. "Certainly, sir, and up until I o'clock or more."

"Were any horses out during the night—any officers' horses, I mean?" "No, sir, not one."

"I thought possibly some officers might have driven or ridden to town."

'No, sir. The only horses that crossed this threshold going out last night were Mr. Sutton's team from town. They were put up here until near 1 o'clock, and then the doctor sent for them. I locked up right after that and can swear nothing else went out."

Chester entered the stable and looked curiously around. Presently his eye lighted on a tall, rangy bay horse that was being groomed in a wide stall near the doorway.

"That's Mr. Jerrold's Roderick, isn't "Yes, sir. He's fresh as a daisy too.

Hasn't been out for three days, and Mr. Jerrold's going to drive the dogcart this morning." Chester turned away.

"Sloat," said he as they left the stable, "if Mr. Jerrold was away from the post last night-and you heard me say he was out of his quarterscould he have gone any way except afoot after what you heard Park say?" "Gone in the Suttons' outfit, I suppose," was Sloat's cantious answer.

In which event he would have been seen by the sentry at the bridge, would

"Ought to have been certainly." "Then we'll go back to the guardhouse." And wonderingly and uncomfortably Sloat followed. He had long since begun to wish he had held his peace and said nothing about the confounded roll call. He hated rows of any kind. He didn't like Jerrold, but he would have crawled ventre a terre across the wide parade sooner than see a scandal in the regiment he loved, and it was becoming apparent to his sluggish faculties that it was no mere matter of absence from quarters that was involving Jerrold. Chester was all aflame over that picture business, he remembered, and the whole drift of his present investigation was to prove that Jerrold was not absent from his post, but absent only from his quarters. If so, where had he spent his time until nearly 4? Sloat's heart was heavy with vague apprehension. He knew that Jerrold had borne Alice Renwick away from the party at an unusually early hour for such things to break up. He knew that he and others had protested against such desertion, but she declared it could not be helped. He remembered another thing-a matter that he thought of at the time, only from another point of view. It now seemed to have significance bearing on this very matter, for

Chester suddenly asked: "Wasn't It rather odd that Miss Beaubien was not here at the dance? | it is." She has never missed one, seems to me, since Jerrold began spooning with her

"Why, she was here." "She was? Are you sure? Rollins never spoke of it, and we had been talking of her. I inferred from what he said that she was not there at all. And I saw her drive homeward with her mother right after parade, so it didn't occur to me that she could have come out again all that distance in time for the dance. Singular! Why shouldn't

Rollins have told me?" Sloat grinned. A dreary sort of smile it was too. "You go into society so heard nothing and saw nothing." seldom you don't see these things. I've more than half suspected Rollins of being quite ready to admire Miss Beaubien himself, and since Jerrold dropped | was it?"

her he has had plenty of opportunity. 'Great guns! I never thought of it! If I'd known she was to be there, I'd have gone myself last night. How did she behave to Miss Renwick?"

"Why, sweet and smiling and chipper as you please. If anything, I think Miss Renwick was cold and distant to her. I couldn't make it out at all."

"And did Jerrold dance with her?" "Once, I think, and they had a talk out on the piazza—just a minute. I happened to be at the door and couldn't | talked all the time, as I remember, and seeing it, and what got me was this: Mr. Hall came out with Miss Renwick on his arm. They were chatting and laughing as they passed me, but dent for the first time that here was a the moment she caught sight of Jerrold and Miss Beambien she stopped and said: 'I think I won't stay out here. It's too chilly,' or something like it,

and went right in, and then Jerrold dropped Miss Beaubien and went after and was too tired to come back-was her. He just handed the young lady over to me, saying he was engaged for thing to be civil to the Suttons." the next dance, and skipped." "Why, I'd like to know? The

'How did she like that? Wasn't she furious?'

ness, and-well, she did say: 'I count staid there until 1 o'clock instead of

don. I didn't know then that you were

"What did she mean? Be 'where,' do you suppose? Sloat, this all means more

upon you. You'll be there,' and he nod-

"I don't know. I can't imagine." "Was it to see her again that night?" "I don't know at all. If it was, he fooled her, for he never went near her again. Rollins put her in the carriage. "Whose? Did she come with the Sut-

"Why, certainly, I thought you knew

"And neither old Mme, Beaubien nor Mrs. Sutton with them? What was the old squaw thinking of?"

By this time they had neared the guardhouse, where several of the mea were seated awaiting the call for the next relief. All arose at the shout of the sentry on No. 1 turning out the guard for the officer of the day. Chester made hurried and impatient acknowledgment of the salute and called to the sergeant to send him the sentry who was at the bridge at I o'clock. It turned out to be a young soldier who had enlisted at the post only six months before and was already known as one of the most intelligent and promising candidates for a corporalship in the garrison.

"Were you on duty at the bridge at 1 o'clock, Carey?" asked the captain. "I was, sir. My relief went on at 11:45 and came off at 1:45."

"What persons passed your post during that time?" "There was a squad or two of mea!

coming back from town on pass. I halted them, sir, and Corporal Murray came down and passed them in.' "I don't mean coming from town.

Who went the other way?" "Only one carriage, sir-Mr. Sut-

"Could you see who were in it?" "Certainly, sir. It was right under

the lamppost this end of the bridge that I stood when I challenged. Lieutenant Rollins answered for them and passes them out. He was sitting beside Mr. Sutton as they drove up, then jumped out and gave me the countersign and bade them good night right there."

"Rollins again," thought Chester.
"Why did he keep this from me?" 'Who were in the carriage?" he ask-

"Mr. Sutton, sir, on the front seat, driving, and two young ladies on the

"Nobody else?" 'Not a soul, sir. I could see in it plain as day. One lady was Miss Sutton and the other Miss Beaubien. I know I was surprised at seeing the latter, because she drove home in her own carriage last evening right after parade. I was on post there at that hour, too, sir. The second relief is on from 5:45 to 7:45."

"That will do, Carey. I see your relief is forming now."

As the officers walked away and Sloat silently plocided along beside his dark browed senior the latter turned to him: "I should say that there was no way in which Mr. Jerrold could have gone townward last night. Should not you?" "He might have crossed the bridge

while the third relief was on and got a horse at the other side." "He didn't do that, Sloat, I had already questioned the sentry on that relief. It was the third that I inspected and visited this morning."

"Well, how do you know he wanted to go to town? Why couldn't he have gone up the river or out to the range? Perhaps there was a little game of 'draw' out at camp."

"There was no light in camp, much less a little game of draw, after 11 o'clock. You know well enough that there is nothing of that kind going on with Gaines in command. That isn't Jerrold's game, even if these fellows were bent on raining their cycsight and nerve and spoiling the chance of getting the men on the division and army teams. I wish it were his game instead of what

in the country somewhere. You seem past the scatty in the dark, and of his bent on the conviction he was up to mischief here around this post. I won't ask you what you mean, but there's more than one way of getting to town if a man wants to very bad."

and row down the river, but he'd never his heart, be back in time for reveille. There goes 6 o'clock, and I must get home and have heard those shots, and that other shave and think this over. Keep your too, we ald be madice inquiries. own counsel, no matter who asks you. If you hear any questions or talk about shooting last night, you know nothing,

"Shooting last night?" exclaimed Sloat, all ageg with eagerness and excitement now. "Where was it? Who

But Chester turned a deaf ear upon him and walked away. He wanted to see Rollins and went straight home.

"Why didn't you tell me Miss Beaubien was out here last night?" was the question he asked as soon as he had entered the room where, all aglow from his cold bath, the youngster was dressing for breakfast. He colored vividly, then laughed.

"Well, you never gave me much chance to say anything, did you? You suddenly vanished and slammed the door. I would have told you had you Department of Photography, U. S. Artillery 1 School, Fortress Mouror, Va. subject Rollins was shy of mentioning.

"Did you go down and see them across sentry post?"! "Certainly. Jerrold asked me to. He said he had to take Miss Renwick home going to turn in. I was glad to do any-

"Why, I'd like to know? They have never invited you to the bouse or shown you any attention whatever. You are That's another thing that got | not their style at all, Rollins, and I'm She smiled after him, all sweet- glad of it. It wasn't for their sake you

being here in bed. I wish"-and he looked wistfully, earnestly at his favor-ite now—"I wish I could think it wasn't for the sake of Miss Beaubien's black

eyes and aboriginal beauty."

"Look here, captain," said Rollins, with another rush of color to his face, "you don't seem to fancy Miss Beaubien, and—she's a friend of mine, and one I don't like to hear slightingly spoken of. You said a good deal last night that—well, wasn't pleasant to hear."
"I know it, Rollins. I beg your par-



"Why didn't you tell me Miss Ecaublen was out here last night?" but some things are pretty clear to my eyes, and-don't you be falling in Jovo with Nima Beaubien. That is no match

"I'm sure you never had a word to say against her father. The old colonel was a perfect type of the French gentle-

man, from all I hear." "Yes, and her mother is as perfect a type of a Chippewa squaw, if she is only a half breed and claims to be only a sixteenth. Rollins, there's Indian blood enough in Nina Beaubien's little finger to make me afraid of her. She is strong as death in love or hate, and you must have seen how she hung on Jerrold's every word all last winter. You must know she is not the girl to be lightly dropped now."

"She told me only a day or two ago they were the best of friends and had never been anything else, " said Rollins

"Has it gone that far, my boy? I had not thought it so had by any means. It's no use talking with a man who has lost his heart. His reason goes with it." And Chester turned away.

"You don't know anything about it," was all poor Rollins could think of as a suitable thing to shout after him, and it made no more impression than it de-

As has been said, Captain Chester had decided before 7 o'clock that but one course lay open to him in the matter as now developed. End Armitage been there he would have had an adviser, but there was no other man whose counsel he cared to seek. Old Captain Gray was as bitter against Jerrold as Chester himself and with even better reason, for he knew well the cause of his little daughter's listless manner and tearful eyes. She had been all radiance and joy at the idea of coming to Sibley and being near the great cities, but not one happy lool had he seen in her sweet and wistful face since the day of her arrival. Wilton, too, was another captain who disliked Jerrold, and Chester's rugged sense of fair play told him that it was not among the enemies of the young officer that he should now seek advice, but that if he had a friend among the older and wiser heads in the regiment it was due to him that that older and wiser head be given a chance to think a litthe for Jerrold's sake. And there was not one among the seniors whom he could call upon. As he ran over their names Chester for the first time realized that his ex-subacten had not a friend among the captains and senior officers now on duty at the fort. His indifference to duties, his airy foppishness, his conceit and self sufficiency, had all served to create a feeling against him, and this had been intensified by his conduct since coming to Sibley. The youngsters still kept up jovial relations with and professed to like bim, but among the seniors there were many men who had only a nod for him on meeting. Wilton had epitomized the situation by saying he "had no use for a masher," and poor old Gray had one day seowlingly referred to him as "the professional beauty.

In view of all this feeling, Chester would gladly have found some man to counsel further delay, but there was none. He felt that he must inform the colonel at once of the fact that Mr. Jerrold was absent from his quarters at the time of the firing, of his belief that "Still, Chester, he may have been out it was Jerrold who struck him and sped conviction that the sooner the young officer was called to account for hi strange conduct the better. As to the epindes of the ladder, the lights and the ferm at the dormer window, he meant "How? Of course he can take a skift | for the present at least, to lock them in

But he forgot that others, too, mu

TO BE CONTINUED. ]

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